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Dance film reflection

My dance film is the product of many inspirations through this module and previous modules. My aim was to include my knowledge of site specific elements and also inclusivity. I decided early on in the process that I would like to include dancers of differing ages and dance experience to showcase a diverse range of abilities. My idea was based on the elements of fire and water as I felt these would be easy to interpret in every performer's own way using shape and movement of not only their bodies but also using props and focusing on different body parts including hair to assist with the illusion of this theme. My intention was to focus specifically on the colours blue and red. I knew these colours were easily accessible to most people in clothing therefore my colour scheme could be effective without added costs. I was also inspired by these colours by the film *Curing Albrecht* by English National Ballet in which these colours feature greatly. The colours work strikingly well for the narrative together with their use of water and props in the piece.

Colours have the ability to create an atmosphere and a story. I used these two colours as a representation of fire and water but colours can also

communicate varying emotions. St Clair, K. (2016) *The Secret Lives Of Colour* describes the colour red as being associated with fire, wealth and power but interestingly that has not always been the case. Associations with this colour have changed throughout history. St Clair (2016) explains how the influence of the colour red on the human psyche has fascinated psychologists into conducting many studies. Red can also be associated with anger and passion which I felt went well for the fire theme. I believe that blue is a clear representation of water and calm which was a perfect contrast to the fiery, passionate and angry red. In contrast to the association of wealth and power of red, according to St Clair (2016) wearing blue in Rome was once associated with mourning and misfortune.

I worked with four separate groups, two of which I set improvisation tasks for, to create their own movement ideas and interpretations. The other two I created a set choreography through tasks of my own for them to perform, one of which I performed alongside another dancer as a duet focusing mainly on our hair. I wanted to use both of our red hair as a hairography section to give the illusion of fire. This idea was influenced by the film *Not A Fan* by Ben Folds. Folds (2015) holds the focus of the viewer with the use of his beautiful red hair which stood out against the dull background making the hair the star of the piece. This imagery also followed through to another section of my piece where I worked with a very young child aged just two years old, who shares this colour hair. For his sections I filmed his natural movements to create his choreography. My inspiration for using natural movements came from the film *In A*

Nutshell by Lost Dog. Lostdog (2020) uses everyday actions to create the atmosphere and portray the story he is revealing in a subtle but mesmerising way.

I created mind maps of ideas in order to assist in creating scores for each section as developed in tutor led sessions through various tasks and workshops I did not intend on creating a narrative film and so although I had a score of each section and each section had an individual choreography, I did not have a sense of the overall shape of my final film until the editing process.

Both of the fire sections were performed by my course peers and myself, all of which have varying levels of dance experience, using scarves as props. The water sections, one of which also used a scarf as a prop, were performed by volunteers of my local community. These performers had little or no previous dance experience. It was not intentional to have split them in this way. I realised once all the filming had been completed that this had happened and I began to worry that I may have unintentionally divided them into two groups portraying fire as experienced and water as non experienced. I realised the importance that the final piece did not portray this, and instead expressed my intention of everyone coming together. I used the young solo dancer as the link between the two.

The editing process was a lot more time consuming than I first anticipated as I began to link movements in different sections to flow together into one choreography, but I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the film come together.

Through tutor-led tasks I developed a passion for filming the same choreography from multiple angles and viewpoints. These gave a well rounded view for my audience and I was eager to carry this new skill forward in my piece. McPherson (2019) notes images being significantly altered and communicated even with very subtle changes of camera position. My aim was to make the viewer feel like they were involved in the dance up close, also inviting the viewer to become a part of the dance themselves. McPherson (2019) continues to explain that as the camera continually moves in space, the material remains interesting to the viewer as the framing of the shots alter. The camera becomes another performer in collaboration with the dancers. As I was using a hand held camera on my mobile phone, it was possible for myself as the videographer to catch smaller, more intricate, magical details of movement which possibly would not have been noticed through a fixed frame camera angle. Throughout filming I continually took shots from many angles including front and back views, low and high angles. I asked a friend to video sections of the beach dance with his drone to give a bird's eye view. Very few of the recordings from the drone were successful or able to be used as I did not collaborate with him enough or check back on footage while we were there to make sure we had the clips I needed. Also unfortunately while I was filming the dancers, most of the drone footage included me in frame. This was entirely my own mistake and one in which I will learn from for future projects. I was however able to use a couple of clips which worked well and had the desired effect. As I had limited time with some of my

dancers, I needed to ensure I had a good range and variety of shots to work with. It was not possible to return and re-shoot some scenes as many dancers were available for only an hour on a specific date due to other commitments and also as most scenes were set outside, filming was dependent on the weather.

Another mistake I made frequently at the beginning of this module was changing my camera position from horizontal to portrait. This meant the footage altered in size and was not aesthetically pleasing for the viewer when edited together as the framing would change. There were a number of clips filmed early on in the process which I would have liked to have included, which included fire pits I had filmed during Halloween family trips. Unfortunately during the editing process I realised these had been filmed in portrait and were not able to be used. These lessons and challenges have been useful discoveries to put into practice if I am lucky enough to work in dance film in any way in the future.

I was eager to include contact work in this film especially as at the time of filming, Covid risks and regulations were low and it had been a while since we had done any contact work in performance. I also wanted the use of contact to signify people coming together again after the hard times of separation lately. Tufnell and Crickmay (1993) explain beautifully how each person during a group piece becomes an ingredient and a succession of events leading to a whole image. This is exactly how I wanted this dance film to feel and hopefully that comes across to the viewer.

In addition to varying camera angles I also wanted to close in on different body parts, paying particular attention to heads and feet. This way I was able to make connections with all the dancers. I took inspiration for these close up ideas from the film *Horizone. Lacey* (2021) transports the viewer to almost touching the dancer and feel completely involved in the movements. I also loved the atmospheric environmental sounds in this film which inspired me to do the same at the beginning of my film and include the natural sound of the little boy running and jumping in the puddles. Choosing the music for the remainder of the song proved more difficult than I first expected. I experimented with various ideas including a voice over poem which I learned during a workshop with Jodi Ann Nicholson, but I did not feel it worked well with my piece. I eventually found a piece of music that I felt contributed well to the piece giving it the correct atmosphere intended in addition to helping with the overall structure of the film.

I have gained a great amount of experience and knowledge during this module and feel confident in expressing interest in future work featuring dance film. I am extremely happy with my final film, I feel quite emotional when I watch it. Although there were challenges and areas I need to improve on, I feel my confidence and passion growing within choreography which makes me excited for the future.

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